



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5D  
371 Morse St. NE  
Washington, DC 20002

April 27, 2022

**RE: BZA 20680**

## Introduction

In November 2019, ANC 5D unanimously approved a variety of changes to the zoning in the Carver/Langston community including one change from zone RA-2 to zone RF-4 on several blocks predominated by townhomes. The Zoning Commission then voted unanimously in support of that change on October 15, 2020. BZA case 20680 is the first BZA case to test the integrity of the newly approved zone and ANC 5D urges the Zoning Commission to uphold its 2020 decision.

## Background & Community Compromise

After a years-long community discussion on zoning which began with the [2018 Kingman Park HPRB Historic District case](#), many residents in the Carver/Langston area expressed an interest in the historic district, but had some reservations. Those residents expressed that the HPRB design standards would help prevent some of the intrusive construction that was diminishing the livability of neighboring properties, but were also disappointed that the restrictive standards would create challenges for our community in creating additional affordable housing. The ANC brokered a community compromise based on resident feedback. That compromise was to change the zoning of townhouses to RF-4 in order to preserve the overall look-and-feel of the community as well as the livability of neighboring properties. This was a widely accepted compromise in the community and **NONE** of the witnesses who appeared in opposition at the hearing for ZC 19-30 actually lived within the newly created RF-4 zone. This is a clear demonstration of widespread community support for the compromise at a hearing where the board heard hours of passionate testimony on the issues impacting our homes.

ANC 5D sincerely hopes that the Zoning Commission will stand by its previous decision to approve the new zone and uphold the rules governing development in our community so that residents can have confidence in the integrity of the commission's decisions. For the zoning commission to reverse course at this juncture, when not even one building has been constructed under the new RF-4 guidelines, undermines the reliability of the commission's dealings with community members, immediately undermines the integrity of the RF-4 zone and sets a precedent that will encourage other communities to rely on historic preservation rather than zoning to address community concerns regarding development. ZC 19-30 was a very well-publicized case and communities across the district as well as housing advocates are closely watching the real-world outcomes of that case on

our community to learn more about available solutions to balance the exact concerns that our community expressed regarding the creation of affordable housing while still making sure that communities are not only livable, but enjoyable for long-term residents.

## Administrative & Community Support

ANC 5D was able to broker the aforementioned compromise by conducting a thorough review of zoning as well as the Future Land Use Map in conjunction with neighbors and the Office of Planning. Both neighbors as well as the Office of Planning expressed a high-level of support for the now approved change to RF-4. Comm. Sydelle Moore (ANC 5D05) and Comm. Bernice Blacknell (ANC 5D04) hosted nearly 10 meetings in regard to zoning and development before the commission voted unanimously to support changes on November 12, 2019. Representatives from the Office of Planning as well as the Office of Zoning attended several of these meetings and hailed them in a report to the Zoning Commission as having set a new standard for exemplary community engagement. The commissioners hosted a sidewalk talk series to help make the community discussion as open and accessible as possible for all residents. During the sidewalk talk series, the commissioners hosted 6 sessions on street corners throughout the neighborhood, knocked on doors and distributed flyers to elicit feedback. During those meetings a variety of issues emerged, including:

- Neighbors' desire for a balanced alternative to the historical designation under consideration at that time.
- The need to add affordable housing while still allowing neighbors living in adjacent townhomes to fully enjoy their properties (front and rear) and limiting the impact of new construction.
- The desire to maintain consistent appearance in the front of properties on the same block including front setbacks.

**Learn More:** For additional details, please read Exhibit 2 from ZC 19-30: [Cvr. Letter from Petitioner – Support for Petition](#).

## Current Realities & Conclusions

The RF-4 zone is the newest mapped zone in the city. The Carver/Langston neighborhood includes the city's only mapped RF-4 zone since approval in 2020. In that time, not one building has ever been built matching the RF-4 zoning criteria. This would be the first building built under the new zoning and permitting a special exception to a zone that has never been enforced undermines the Zoning Commission's prior decision in ZC 19-30 and the community's faith in our local government. The Carver/Langston community worked in good faith with a variety of District agencies to reach a compromise to best serve all residents as we charted a way forward. It is the sincere hope of ANC 5D that the Zoning Commission will honor their previous decision and allow the new RF-4 zoning to be implemented as originally intended to create a balanced, gradual approach to the development in our community that honors the rights of all neighbors.

Respectfully,



Comm. A. Sydelle Moore  
Chairperson, ANC 5D